

O 021347Z APR 85  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2472  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 01997

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SREF](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)  
SUBJECT: DETERIORATING SITUATION IN SOUTH LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 1974

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. ON APRIL 1, FIGHTING CONTINUED BETWEEN LF, LAF, AND PALESTINIAN FORCES IN SIDON. CASUALTIES WERE LOWER, BUT THE EXODUS OF CIVILIANS CONTINUED. VISITING SYRIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF KHOLI REPORTEDLY PROMISED SYRIAN MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR USE BY THE LAF IN THE SOUTH, AND LAF COMMANDER AOUN TRAVELED TO DAMASCUS TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS. RECENTLY DELIVERED, U.S.-ORIGIN APC'S ARE ALSO TO BE SENT TO SIDON TO REINFORCE LAF UNITS THERE. END SUMMARY.

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FIGHTING IN SIDON  
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¶2. (U) ON MORNING OF APRIL 1, FIGHTING CONTINUED IN THE SIDON AREA BETWEEN LF MILITIAMEN AND PALESTINIAN FORCES AND THEIR ALLIES IN THE VICINITY OF THE AYN AL-HILWAH AND MIYAH MIYAH REFUGEE CAMPS. FIGHTING ALSO ERUPTED AGAIN BETWEEN THE LF AND LAF ALONG THE KAYAHA/KANAYA/MAR ELIAS FRONT. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, THE SHELLING SPREAD TO OTHER AREAS OF SIDON INCLUDING THE PORT, WHICH BECAME THE TARGET OF LF SHELLING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE RECENT FIGHTING. THESE SAME UNCONFIRMED REPORTS INDICATED THAT AN ISRAELI NAVAL VESSEL APPEARED OFF THE COAST OF SIDON AND FIRED AT LEAST ONE SHELL ON AYN AL-HILWAH.

¶3. (U) FOLLOWING A LULL IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON, FIGHTING AGAIN ERUPTED AT ABOUT 1700 HOURS, REPORTEDLY WITH LF TANK POSITIONS OVERLOOKING THE CITY SHELLING THE REFUGEE CAMPS, DOWNTOWN SIDON, HAY TAAMIR, AND LAF POSITIONS ON MAR ELIAS HILL NORTHEAST OF THE CITY.

¶4. (U) INITIAL CASUALTY FIGURES INDICATE TWO DEATHS AND TEN INJURIES, I.E., CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THE CASUALTY TOLL OVER THE MARCH 30-31 WEEKEND.

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REFUGEE FLOWS  
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¶5. (U) AN UNWRA SOURCE QUOTED IN THE BEIRUT PRESS PROVIDED DETAILED FIGURES ON THE OUTFLOW OF PALESTINIAN REFUGEES FROM THE AYN AL-HILWAH AND MIYAH MIYAH CAMPS IN SIDON TO UNWRA CAMPS ELSEWHERE IN LEBANON. OF A TOTAL OF 215 FAMILIES FLEEING SIDON, 187 HAVE COME TO CAMPS IN THE BEIRUT AREA, OF WHICH 76 TO SHATILA, 108 TO BURJ BRAJNAH, AND THREE TO MAR ELIAS. THE TWENTY-EIGHT OTHER REFUGEE FAMILIES MOVED TO CAMPS AROUND TRIPOLI. IN ADDITION, AN UNDETERMINED NUMBER OF REFUGEES HAVE RESETTLED IN THE RAWCHAH AND AYN MURAYSA NEIGHBORHOODS OF WEST BEIRUT. THE UNWRA SOURCE PLACED THE NUMBER OF PALESTINIAN CASUALTIES IN SIDON SINCE MARCH 29 AT THIRTY-ONE KILLED AND ABOUT 100 INJURED.

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KHOLI VISIT; MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR SOUTH  
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¶6. (U) ON APRIL 1, SARG PRESIDENT ASSAD DISPATCHED SYRIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CHIEF

MAJOR GENERAL MUHAMMAD KHOLI TO BEIRUT TO MEET WITH PRESIDENT GEMAYEL AND OTHER SENIOR GOL OFFICIALS. PRESS REPORTS INDICATE THAT IN A LETTER CARRIED BY KHOLI, ASSAD LINKED THE DETERIORATING SITUATION AROUND SIDON WITH "PARTITIONIST PROJECTS" ALLEGEDLY UNDERTAKEN BY LF LEADER JA'JA' WITH ISRAELI BACKING. ACCORDING TO THESE REPORTS, ASSAD AGREED TO PROVIDE LEBANON WITH UNSPECIFIED ARMS AND OTHER MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR USE AROUND SIDON.

¶7. (U) LATER ON APRIL 1, GENERAL MICHEL AOUN MADE A HASTY TRIP TO DAMASCUS, HIS FIRST SINCE BECOMING LAF COMMANDER IN CHIEF IN JULY 1984. HE MET THERE WITH SYRIAN ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF HIKMAT SHIHABI AND DEFENSE MINISTER TLASS, REPORTEDLY TO WORK OUT THE DETAILS OF THE SYRIAN ARMS SUPPLIES.

¶8. (C) ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS CONFIRMED BY OMC, THE LAF PLANS TO REINFORCE ITS PRESENCE IN SIDON WITH TWENTY-EIGHT OF THE THIRTY RECENTLY DELIVERED, U.S.-ORIGIN M113 ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT THE LAF WILL ALSO SEND TO SIDON A BATTALION OF THE 1ST BRIGADE PRESENTLY STATIONED IN THE BIQA'.

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MUSLIM REACTIONS  
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¶9. (U) MUSLIM RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS HAVE ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY ACCUSED THE CHRISTIAN LF MILITIA OF PROVOKING THE FIGHTING IN SIDON AT ISRAEL'S INSTIGATION AS PART OF AN ALLEGED SCHEME TO PARTITION LEBANON INTO SECTARIAN MINI-STATES.

¶10. (U) ON APRIL 1, SUNNI RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL LEADERS INCLUDING EDUCATION MINISTER SALIM AL-HUSS MET AT DAR AL-FATWA, THE SEAT OF THE SUNNI MUFTI OF THE REPUBLIC, TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION IN SIDON. THEY ISSUED A STATEMENT WHICH (A) URGED THE GOL TO HONOR ITS POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO REINFORCE, WITH ADDITIONAL MEN AND EQUIPMENT, LAF UNITS IN SIDON AND ELSEWHERE IN THE SOUTH; (B) REQUESTED THE GOL TO MOBILIZE ALL FORCES TO HALT THE MASSACRES IN SIDON, ITS EASTERN SUBURBS, AND THE REFUGEE CAMPS; (C) WARNED AGAINST THE SPREAD OF VIOLENCE TO THE IQLIM AL-KHARRUB, THE WESTERN BIQA', AND RASHAYA, AND TO THE COUNTRY AT LARGE; AND (D) URGED ALL LEBANESE POLITICAL AND FACTIONAL LEADERS TO "ADOPT A RESPONSIBLE HISTORIC STAND THAT WILL CHECK THE GROUP INVOLVED IN THE ISRAELI CONSPIRATORIAL AND PARTITIONIST DESIGN."

¶10. (U) SHIITE AMAL LEADER NABIH BARRI REJECTED RECENT PROPOSALS FOR A NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE SOUTH, STATING THAT SUCH A CONFERENCE WOULD ONLY "COVER THE (GOL'S) FAILURES AND INACTION." BARRI CLAIMED THAT THE LF-LAF CLASHES WOULD NEVER HAVE OCCURRED IF THE (PREDOMINANTLY MUSLIM) LAF UNITS IN THE SOUTH HAD BEEN REINFORCED AS AGREED.

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CHRISTIAN REACTION  
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¶11. (U) FOLLOWING THE APRIL 1 MEETING OF THE LEBANESE FORCES "EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE," KARIM PAKRADUNI ACCUSED ISRAEL OF INCITING VIOLENCE AMONG LOCAL MILITIAS IN SIDON IN ORDER TO DIVERT THEIR ENERGIES AND THEREBY ENSURE ITS OWN SECURITY. AT THE SAME TIME, HE ACCUSED THE PALESTINIANS OF PROVOKING COMMUNAL DISCORD IN SIDON IN ORDER TO REESTABLISH THEIR HEGEMONY IN SOUTH LEBANON. THE SOUTH, HE SAID, IS THE LAST PART OF THE COUNTRY WHERE THE PALESTINIANS CAN ACT FOLLOWING THEIR LOSSES IN BEIRUT AND TRIPOLI.

¶12. (U) PAKRADUNI STATED THAT THE LF HAD PROPOSED A PLAN TO CREATE A WIDE NO MAN'S LAND BETWEEN THE

COMPETING FORCES IN SIDON, THEREBY ENDING HOSTILITIES, PREVENTING THE INVASION OR INFILTRATION OF ANY GROUP, AND AVOIDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NARROW DEMARCATION LINE SIMILAR TO THE "GREEN-LINE" BETWEEN EAST AND WEST BEIRUT. TO BUTTRESS THIS MILITARY PLAN POLITICALLY, PAKRADUNI CALLED FOR A MEETING OF SIDON'S POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS AND ALL THE PROTAGONISTS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN THE CONFLICT.

¶13. (U) MEANWHILE, FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN STATED THAT ONLY THE LAF CAN ENSURE THE SECURITY OF SIDON, SINCE IT IS "THE ONLY FORCE WHICH ENJOYS THE CONFIDENCE OF ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE REGION."

LYNE